

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

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CHAPTER XIII.

FOURTH RESIDENCE IN AMHERST.

(No. 7.)

In the year 1846 I was undesignedly and unexpectedly involved in a controversy of long continuance. We had commenced a Mission in Burmah; and it was obviously incumbent on us to aid in furnishing translations of the Scriptures in Burmese and Karen. As the Baptist Missionaries in the East conscientiously translated the word baptize by words signifying to immerse, the British and Foreign and the American Bible Societies refused to grant any money—contributed by Baptists as well as others—toward circulating the versions made by them. It therefore devolved on the Baptists to raise the funds requisite for this purpose: otherwise several nations among whom they had Missions, and in whose languages no other versions existed, must remain destitute of the word of God. Consequently a number of us in Amherst regarded it as our duty, (stating the case with all kindness at a Meeting of the Cumberland Branch Bible Society, and expressing our goodwill toward it and all similar institutions,) to form a Society for the raising of funds to assist our brethren in giving the sacred Scriptures to the perishing heathen in Burmah and other Eastern countries.

But on the 12th day of February an extraordinary Meeting of the Cumberland Branch Bible Society was held, in which men who had never contributed a penny to the funds of that Society, took an active part in castigating us—and me especially, who had done more for it than all my opponents—for now giving our money to aid our brethren. Several of the speakers expressed a wish, if they were incorrect, to be corrected. When six men had occupied about four hours, and the last Resolution condemnatory of our proceedings had been passed, I respectfully requested permission to make a few remarks by way of explanation; but this was resolutely withstood by the speakers. Had fifteen minutes been allowed me to correct erroneous impressions, the matter might have rested there; and a better understanding and more friendly state of feeling been secured. It was suggested by one of my accusers, that I might have recourse to the press, or call another meeting. The latter course was adopted. At that meeting, held Feb. 18th, my opponents were invited to give any explanations, or make any remarks that they wished to offer. This was declined; but notice was given that another meeting would be held on the 26th, to be conducted as the former had been. As many incorrect statements were made in a session of five hours, with no opportunity to explain—a report went abroad that I could not reply—I deemed it my indispensable duty to publish an explanatory statement.

None of my opponents seemed disposed to enter into the real merits of the case, or to attempt to shew that the versions offensive to them were incorrect; but three of them published severe strictures on my communication, charging me with "misrepresentation," and at least plainly insinuating that it was intentional. Like all other men, I have always been liable to misunderstand, and consequently to misrepresent undesignedly; but I am not conscious of having ever, in any of my debates, been guilty of intentional misrepresentation. It is, in reality, falsehood, which is a degrading vice, and heinous sin. My opponents, however, failed to adduce an instance in which any of their expressions had been misrepresented even through mistake. One of them, after being urgently pressed to specify a case, alleged that I had said a certain thing was "expressly denied," which, though he could not affirm, that it was not denied virtually, he said, "was not"—putting the word in capitals—"EXPRESSLY DENIED." This evinced that the charge of real misrepresentation could not be established. Aware of the justness of my cause, and the desirableness of having the public mind disabused, I followed my assailants in the papers in which they published, so far as they was allowed; and when it was not, in the "Christian Messenger," willing for them to publish in it too.

After some time a learned and talented disputant residing at a distance, evidently aware that my opponents needed assistance—he never denied this—volunteered his services in the

contest, and published a number of long communications in several different papers. He too was followed by me like as were the others. When he published a series of his letters in pamphlet form, I adopted the same course; and purchased many copies of his, and sold them with mine, that people might see both sides together.

A singular event, in connection with my studies, arose from this debate. When my learned opponent referred to Hebrew, Greek, or German, I was prepared to meet him; but when he made statements relative to Syriac, I could reply only on the authority of others. This consideration induced me—like Greenfield in a case somewhat similar—to study the language. Owing to its near affinity to Hebrew, like that of Italian to Latin, the task was an easy one. A sufficient knowledge of Syriac was speedily attained to enable me to trace and compare words in it, and, with the aid of a good Lexicon—mine is that of Castell, edited by Michaelis—to ascertain their meanings, and their several applications. The study was so interesting to me, that I pursued it, and perused the whole Bible in Syriac, with much pleasure, and a good degree of profit.

It may be added here, that a fifth disputant perceiving the failure of the fourth—admitted by many of his friends—came forward to the rescue. When, however, he had read my reply to him, he prudently desisted from proceeding any further.

On the 18th day of June I attended the College Exhibition in Wolfville, and presided. All was quite satisfactory.

At our Association in Bridgetown, in which my Brethren were pleased to appoint me Moderator, it was my privilege to hear the venerable Harris Harding preach a good sermon, at the age of 85 years. There were also present our beloved fathers E. Manning, T. S. Harding, T. Magee, and Joseph Dimock. The worthy Brother last named, though much indisposed at the time, attended a Committee meeting on the evening of Tuesday, June 23rd, and took an active part in the transaction of the business. The next day, being very ill, he was conveyed to the residence of a son-in-law and daughter living not far from Bridgetown, where he quietly waited for his release, and peacefully departed on Monday, June 29th, aged 78 years. Bro. Dimock was a remarkably kind-hearted man, universally esteemed as a devout and upright Christian, and "a good minister of Jesus Christ." He had labored in the gospel ministry faithfully, zealously, and very successfully upwards of 50 years. "The memory of the just is blessed."

At this Session of our Association it was proposed to send another Missionary to labor with Bro. Burpe. It was suggested by me, that, in the event of the permanent failure of Bro. Burpe's health, if he were alone, our Mission in Burmah would be broken up. Many have since regretted that the measure proposed was not carried into effect.

Rev. (now Dr.) J. M. Cramp met with us, and gave us a pleasing account of the Grand Ligne Mission, which excited a lively interest in it. This has been productive of happy effects, especially by drawing attention to the French population in our own Province, and encouraging the hope of success in labors among them, now in some measure realized.

After an extensive agency tour in New Brunswick, I attended a Quarterly Meeting in Sackville, which was commenced September 6th. An unhappy disagreement of long continuance among our people there, had done much harm. At this Meeting, which was a truly delightful one, by the Divine blessing peace and amity were restored.

Soon after this a Mission was fulfilled by me on P. E. Island. Much acceptable aid was afforded me by my esteemed Brother S. T. Rand, then resident there. We assisted our Brethren Shaw, Scott, and others in establishing a Missionary Board.

My return across the Gulf, near the end of October, was a perilous one. Attempts were made in two packets, both of which were obliged to run back. The latter while at anchor parted her cable, and was driven by a strong wind on a bar, without any anchor, and with only a small leaky boat. Not long after this she was cast away, and all on board perished.

While engaged as a Commissioner of Schools with the Board in Cumberland, Nov. 18th, a request was sent me to visit a sick woman. It was a distressing case. She had lived for years within a stone's throw of a place of worship, where the gospel was frequently preached, but scarcely ever attended. On my entering the room, with an agonized and despairing look, she exclaimed, "Oh! Mr. Tupper, what can I

do?" Of course I endeavoured to give her suitable advice, directing her to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, read an appropriate portion of Scripture, and offered prayer on her behalf. Several days, did indeed, subsequently elapse before her departure, but not a word of instruction could be communicated to her, for both her sight and her hearing were entirely gone! How dangerous to neglect religion while in health, and all the senses are possessed! How suitable—how well worthy of regard—the admonition of Mr. Erskine:—"Are eyes to read, or ears to hear a trust? Shall both be cramm'd anon in death with dust? Then trifle not to please thine ear or eye, But read thou, hear thou, for eternity."

For the Christian Messenger.

Fairchild on Baptism.

Dear Brother,—

I am not fond of religious controversy, especially when such discussion is conducted, on either side, in an unchristian spirit. For several months past I have been aware of the circulation to some extent of a book on the Baptismal question, which I deem very erroneous—not with a view to the encouragement of religious controversy, but for the interests of truth and souls. I ask you to publish the following reference to it. The book is entitled: "Scripture Baptism, its mode and subjects, by Aahel G. Fairchild, D. D." I hardly know how, in measured words, to express my astonishment and indignation in respect to that book. Well did a very respectable Presbyterian Elder recently remark to a friend of mine that it is a disgrace to have that book in one's house. Its possession and countenance are certainly a reproach on one's intelligence, if not Christianity. So far, as its discussion of truth and facts as bearing on the Baptist denomination is concerned, it is characterized by a quantity and quality of misrepresentation, caricature, and slander truly astounding to come from the pen and heart of a professedly christian man and Doctor of Divinity. But lest I may seem to be dealing only in assertions, I proceed at once to make a few extracts and comments thereon.

I open the first page and read as follows: "It is well known that there is some diversity of opinion and practice in regard to the mode of Christian Baptism." So far unobjectionable. But what of the three next sentences? "The far greater part of evangelical christians, amounting to more than nine tenths of the whole, content themselves with a simple application of water by pouring or sprinkling, as the most scriptural and significant mode. On the other hand, a large and respectable division of the Protestant church insist upon a dipping of the whole body as essential to the validity of the ordinance. Another smaller division warmly contend that the baptism is not valid, unless the dipping is thrice repeated."

Now without delaying here to discuss the first of these three sentences, in reference to the second I would remark that I was not before aware that if any article be divided into ten parts a piece of the size of less than one tenth would be a "large" division. Dr. F.'s arithmetic is to say the least somewhat novel and peculiar. As to his compliment, "respectable," he soon subsequently shows that it is the merest modicum of respect he personally entertained toward the Baptists. But this author shows himself an ignoramus in Ecclesiastical or Church history. For he impliedly asserts, in the last sentence above quoted, that a "smaller division" than the Baptist connections practice trine immersion.

Now Baptists "are not ashamed of any page of their history, nor of the names that fill their roll-call. In literature and science, in works of mercy and charity, in missionary endeavors, in theological lore, they have more than a respectable standing." "Robert Hall, the Chrysostom of modern times, the golden-mouthed, was a Baptist. John Bunyan, the world-renowned allegorist, whose feet now tread the streets of the celestial city, was a Baptist. Andrew Fuller, that noble old logician, whose theology is as strong as scripture truth, was a Baptist. John Milton, the prince of poets, was a Baptist, in sentiment" (and in the last part of his life in all probability by church-connection). "John Foster, ranking with the profoundest essayists of the world, was a Baptist." "William Carey, the first in our times to go out as a foreign missionary, the originator of modern missions, was a Baptist. The largest assembly that convenes today in the world for religious purposes, is Baptist. Such is the denomination which claims also the name of Roger Williams—a standard-bearer in the mighty army," once a persecuted exile for conscience' sake, but sub-

sequently the founder of a noble commonwealth, and the human originator of religious or soul liberty in the United States.

In the United States there are at the present time about one million and a half Baptist church-members; and, of adherents through family connection or sentiment, about one quarter of the entire population; thus numbering more than twice as many as any other denomination except the Methodist, and in church-members rather more than they (the Methodists), while in adherents the Baptists—as might be expected from the respective modes of church-increase—number rather less. I have it also on good authority that the Baptists are at the present time increasing in the United States at the rate of thirty thousands annually.

In the Provinces of the "New Dominion" there are now about forty thousand Baptist church members. In Great Britain and Ireland two hundred and fifty thousand members; in Germany, about sixteen thousand; in Sweden, nearly seven thousand; in Burmah, India, and China, not less probably than sixteen thousand church-members. And in all these latter enumerations in order to ascertain the number of Baptist adherents, their church members must be multiplied by the figure four or five. The foregoing statements refer exclusively to Regular or Calvinistic Baptists. Were we to add to our members as the Methodists and Presbyterians do when estimating numerically their strength, those who agree with us in several particulars but differ in others, our denomination would be swollen to a much larger aggregate.

But notwithstanding this fair show of facts in figures, the Baptists in a merely numerical point of view do certainly not compare as yet with those divisions of the Protestant church, which practice what is called trine immersion. They, including the Greek, the Armenian, and the Oriental churches comprise a population of about one hundred millions. In these churches the child is thrice immersed, once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, and the third time, in the name of the Holy Spirit.

But in another place, namely on page 120 of Fairchild's book, he asserts that "the Greek Church nearly equals in numbers that of Rome." Now according to Distierce, probably the most accurate statistician of this age, the Roman Catholic number at the present time one hundred and seventy millions; the Greek Church seventy-six millions. Here again does Fairchild prove wholly unreliable in the statistics of Church history.

I therefore ask if those three sentences on the first page of Fairchild's Scripture Baptism are not of such a character as materially to damage his entire book for learned and truthful statement?

But I pass on to a foot-note on page 13, and read thus:—"That the duty of immersion is not clearly taught in the Scriptures seems to be indirectly admitted by a large body of the most zealous immersionists among us; for they are expending tens of thousands of dollars in getting up a new version of the Bible, with such alterations of the old as shall make it teach Baptist opinion clearly and explicitly. This is a very important concession on their part."

The fact that two or three persons of other denominations have been prevailed on by large pecuniary inducements, to assist in manufacturing a Baptist Bible, is no alleviation of the case. The italics in the foregoing quotation are mine. What a tissue of slanderous falsehoods is the above extract in the light of the following facts recently obtained from the Bible Union Rooms, New York.

"With regard to the work of the Union, we have had the service of from fifteen to twenty different scholars, embracing nine denominations, i. e. Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Baptists, Reformers, Seventh Day Baptists, &c. "In the formation of the Final Committee (of Revision) no considerations of a denominational character were permitted. Men the most eminent in their fitness for the work were chosen, and it so occurred that half were Baptist and half Pædo-Baptist. We are not at liberty to publish the names of our Pædo-Baptist friends who have assisted us, for it would be the signal for persecution to be let loose upon them." The foregoing statements are open to investigation, challenge contradiction, and need no comment when placed beside Dr. Fairchild's slur and fling.

Again on page 18, after noticing 1 Cor. xii. 13, and Rom. vi. 3, and sneeringly inquiring if the Baptist Bible Union will use the word p or immersis in those passages, Fairchild says: "But here our opponents will ask, 'Do you then say that the word means to sprinkle, and that it could be so translated in the above passages?' answer, No. We have never asserted, nor